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The Prodigal Son

ROBERT GUELLUY

The God who reveals himself in the pages of Scripture does so as the "one who loves first." He is affection that nothing hinders, love that nothing deters; he is gift of self. He is likewise the all-powerful one — omnipotence which is pure capacity to love. Moreover, he is the infinitely free God, his liberty being simply one aspect of his love. (One can be free in prison, just as one can be shackled outside, for the spirit of bondage exists to the extent that there is incapacity to love.) The God of revelation is wholly free because he is not restricted by any obstacle — there is nothing within him or outside him to limit his power to love. He is entirely free to think of others. He is therefore the antithesis of pride, a stranger to all selfishness. Such is the God of our faith who looks on us with a wholly genuine affection.

What God is has become incarnate in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has taken human form. Christ has described himself in these words, the only ones he has left us that reveal his human soul: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." He is meek because he is good, because he knows how to love. Gentleness is a form of power; violence is indicative of weakness. He is meek, and that is a form of liberty; the meek are strong and it is they who are free.

Jesus, our brother, is meek and humble of heart. And in him and through him we come to know God, our Father and his. Behold the family spirit of that family into which we have been welcomed gratuitously, of which we have become a part through no merit of our own. It is necessary to conform to this family spirit, the spirit of the holy Church, the spirit which is of the Trinity itself, the Holy Spirit. We are called to put on the ways of God. Having freely received all, we must freely give all. We are to share in the freedom and strength which is in God by being, like his Son, meek and humble of heart.

This is the program for our conversion: we must contemplate the God of our faith in order to become like him — in order that,

gazing upon him, we may be changed by this vision. Thus, seeing us enraptured with his divinity and eager to welcome him, he will hasten to accomplish his work in us. Our life should be a constant opening, a gracious unfolding that will make us more and more responsive, more and more capable of being fashioned by the Holy Spirit. It is necessary that each day we let fall a little of our pride, that we forsake some of our harshness, in order to progress in meekness and humility of heart.

To understand God's love more realistically we must probe into his mercy, for we are far from comprehending just how completely gratuitous is his kindness toward us. And how little we see that to be God and to do the work he does, it is necessary that he be indeed meek and humble. In fact, to love us as we are, it is truly indispensable that he be so.

Let us read the parable of the prodigal son so as to understand better this divine mercy, to fathom the heart of God and become more like him.

"A man had two sons, and the younger said, 'Father, give me my part of the inheritance.'" The boy did not try to cheat his father; he is not a thief; he has a sense of justice. He simply claims his rights. Thus does all sin begin. We know so well this urge to claim our due; what righteous men we are! The young man is well provided for as the younger son in the paternal house, but he is conscious of being "someone" and he wishes to be on his own. It is clear that one is not a man when one plays the man; it is a stage of all adolescence. There is a pseudo-maturity which is only an external show of strength; it is our misfortune that we never seem to shake off once for all this crisis of adolescence. We wish to be the strong ones and it is a sign of weakness; we wish to be grown up and it is a sign of puerility.

Look at the childishness of the younger son who thinks himself a man. He decides that he is ready to enjoy his autonomy. In like manner does all temptation enter our minds, all beginnings of sin. The father divides his goods between them. (When it is a question of our Father in heaven, he only permits our sin, tolerating our foolishness while anticipating the joy of reconciliation, foreseeing the enrichment which will come to us from our faults. To those who love God, all things turn to good, even sin.)

The younger son, gathering his possessions, his just due, leaves with that feeling of lordship that marks all sin. Putting aside filial dependence and humble acceptance, he sets out on his way. Now he feels important, enterprizing. You can imagine the "headiness" of this youngster, the infantile vanity which heralds the beginning of his fall. He leaves for a distant country (every country is distant when the father's house is foreign to it.)

After spending everything, he is hungry; all the discomforts of the situation begin to dawn upon him. He offers his services to one of the country dwellers. So ends the will to independence, the dream of autonomy, the pretension to be one's own master. In place of the free man that he was, behold the slave! See where his aspirations to independence have led him. His new master sends him to care for the pigs; doubtless he is hardly suited to great deeds, so the master has used him accordingly. Now the prodigal is hungry; people think less of him than of the animals. At least the pigs are fed, while his own nourishment is blandly overlooked. The owner does not care to see him gain weight.

This humiliation is good; it makes him think. The young man acknowledges to himself, "I am a fool. How many servants at home have plenty of food while I am here dying of hunger." Then he has the courage to say, "I will go back to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned.' "

This supposes, obviously, a very great audacity; it implies a *certainty* concerning the father's goodness. It is the homage of a very true confidence and the beginning of a conversion toward meekness and humility. He could have said, "People will gossip, they'll make fun of me, seeing that I went from such an ideal situation to such a shameful one. I left home triumphantly as a free man, ripe for the great adventure of my life. Now I come back like a fickle good-for-nothing. They'll mock me...." He could have said, "No, it would be better to die of hunger than be ridiculed." But he does not turn in upon himself — and this is at once a miracle and his salvation; instead of indulging in wounded pride, he thinks of his father's goodness.

The cure lies in this about-face. We must follow suit, neither dwelling on our misery nor counting the cost to our pride. This

is what secretly stops us, what prevents our entering into the ways of holiness: one must be so simple!

Notice how the prodigal son has known how to pass over the "what will people say" stage, and forgetting himself, has turned to the father. "I will go to him and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, surely, but treat me as one of your hired servants.'" To approach the father in such a way supposes genuine confidence. Still, he has not yet enough confidence; he dares not believe the father to be as good as he really is. He never dreams of the welcome that is to come, but he has the courage to set out and to return. That is the about-face we must all make; we must return to the Father.

When he was still far off his father saw him, and he was touched with compassion. The son could not outdo the father; from afar the latter awaited his coming. For a long time the father had watched, hands outstretched, ready to receive him. The father needs him; it is not by chance that he sees him coming. Before the son seeks the father, the father is seeking the son. And the father runs toward him to embrace him.

See the eagerness of our God, the God of majesty. Nothing is so tremendous as being loved. Terrible while infinitely adorable is this God with whom we can be perfectly at ease — this God who, far from being distant, *runs toward us,* as the father of the prodigal ran to his son and held him for a long moment. Our God is a tender God who waits for the joy of forgiving us. We must give up hardening our hearts and justifying ourselves. "Today if you should hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Matins calls to us each day. Let yourselves be softened by this loving God. Today he awaits you, he runs toward you, ready to enfold you lovingly and longingly.

And then the son makes the simple confession he had prepared: "Father, I have sinned...." This is the form our avowal should take. Too often our self-accusation and regret are not the consciousness of having failed the Lord, not the sentiment of having been an ungrateful child, not the sorrow of having disappointed a love. Rather, it is a sadness at having disappointed ourselves. Our pride is hurt; we are failures. We are ashamed, we reproach our-

selves, we are quite dissatisfied. This is not the Christian attitude at finding oneself a sinner. It is a form of egoism to chafe at one's pettiness and to be dejected over one's faults.

The Christian sense of sin is the awareness of having failed the Father in heaven, of having responded ungratefully to his affection, of having refused Love. Ordinarily, the feeling we have about our sin is simply that we have been poor devils. We experience remorse and discontent because sin wounds the image we have been making of ourselves; it punctures our self-esteem. We do not have the consciousness of having been bad children. Instead of facing our faults in a heart-to-heart converse with God, we try to erase them in a tete-a-tete with ourselves. When the Apostle fell at the feet of our Lord saying, "I am a sinful man, O Lord," it was not the fruit of an introspective scrutiny, but of an awareness of himself in God's presence. We must rediscover the Father to know how we have failed him.

And the prodigal son continues, "I am not worthy to be called your son." Obviously this is quite true, but the father cares little for that truth. It is rather we who make a fuss about the truth. We are all for justice; we have so little heart. But God thinks with his heart. Not listening to his son's little speech, the father calls to his servants, "Quickly! Bring the finest robe and clothe him." The father does not waste time in useless words and long remarks; he acts. The divine affection is effective, dynamic, impelling. "Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Take the best calf and kill it. Let us eat and celebrate!"

Such is the joy of God, who is never more wholly himself than in showing mercy. So we address him in the liturgy: "God, whose proper gift is to pardon...." One does not really know the Father until he has experienced his mercy. Heaven itself will be *human wonderment before divine compassion*, before the divine pardon. Even our Lady's spirituality is a rapturous amazement at the sight of God's mercy.

In the midst of this joy the elder son appears — wise, cool-headed, apart. He hears the music and the dancing and calls the servants to find out what has happened. They inform him. He is angry; he is moved, not by the return of his brother, not by the fact that the family is reunited, but by the death of the calf!

And he says, "That's going too far." He does not understand. Like us, he has a sense of justice, and this turn of affairs has abused it no end. "How many years I have served you without ever disobeying. Yet never have you given such a feast for my friends and me." And so he makes his complaints.

Let us digress for a moment. We have much to learn from nature, from the ways of animals. On the highway one kills very few cats but many chickens. Why? Because the cat is courageous and the fowl is fearful. This is manifest anatomically, in that the cat has his eyes in front and looks ahead while the chicken has his eyes on either side. We look at things as the chickens do. We spend our lives with our eyes going in opposite directions, curiously watching others and living by comparisons instead of looking straight ahead. This makes us unhappy. It is the same in the matter of flying; the chicken makes a lot of noise and does not go very high; the swallow has a more successful approach and also a quieter one.

Now see this elder son poisoned, as we are, by comparisons. One can be obedient and faithful for a long time without having a feast with the fatted calf. But as soon as others have it.... Remember the workers of the morning hour who are satisfied with their salary until the workers of the eleventh hour are paid. We are completely upset by the divine bounty, because we are so given to exact measurement. Thus is born the spirit of jealousy, and pride stirs again.

So pride welled up in the elder son. Yet the father is very good to him. The words he addresses to his first-born are genuine praise: "You, my son, are always with me, and all I have is yours. Put away the spirit of a hired man and be a true son. We are together; this is your home. Isn't it enough to live in this family? Be at ease; if you want a calf, why haven't you taken it? Why do you act as a stranger? Why such weak love? Why have you contented yourself with being just a good and faithful servant? Why put all your effort into mere external fidelity, holding back your heart? Today we must rejoice, for your brother who was dead has come back to life; he was lost and has been found!"

The joy of God is this reunion, this return. All reconciliation is a remaking, a renewal, a creative act; it is not simply a question

of things being as they were before, but of a deeper comprehension and a fuller love. The call is addressed to us; we must listen to it. God's delight is to pardon; he asks us to give him this joy. Do not refuse him; submit. Cease all calculation for services rendered; stop harboring a spirit closed to folly. We must acknowledge our poverty, put on simplicity, and adopt this mad gesture of going to the Father, no matter what people say, no matter how ridiculous we appear. We must go forward under this humiliation.

Is God worth this trouble, yes or no? Do we understand that his love is his mercy? The liberty and joy in which we must live is the blossoming freedom of one who has nothing of himself but whom God loves, simply because God is God. Yet we persist in trying to be proprietors, to build up and defend our rights, to be correct. We have so many good ideas and so many great plans! These must be thrown overboard, for they mask a preoccupation with self, a camouflaged pride, an obstinacy that shields itself behind pseudo-virtue. It is too late to feign innocence, to approach God with a clear conscience, to sport a self-sufficiency.

There is time, however, to be the prodigal son. Indeed, our vocation is to be prodigal children restored to the Father. We are not to scrutinize our faults, labor over them, and then hide in a corner, disappointed and angry at ourselves. If the pardoned son had begun to speak of his faults, the father would have silenced him. "My son, the past is past. Is it thus that one lives at home with his father?"

The spirituality in which we must live is that of pardoned sinners. It is not a spirituality turning in upon self, but the marvelous unfolding of a child lost in wonder at the heart of his father, by the welcome accorded to sinners. We must accede to that liberty, the joy of being nothing, of being the poor whom God loves in their nothingness. If we were really just and had nothing with which to reproach ourselves, we should never know the happiness of being forgiven. Let us regret nothing and cease pretending to be just and wanting to be right in everything. We try to justify ourselves in so many ways instead of living in intimacy with God, in true liberty, in a joyous expansion of soul in the happiness of being loved for nothing, along with Mary Magdalen, the good thief, and our Lady.

For the holiness of the Mother of God also depends on mercy. Hers is a sanctity coming from the redemption, her sin remitted in advance. Like us, Mary marvels at the divine art of forgiving; she is the immaculate one only because of this. Her spirituality is like ours; there is only one kind for the family of Adam: the spirituality of the reconciled prodigal son, of the pardoned sinner.

These are the ways we must put on. No longer may we live in the Father's house claiming our due. Such is the formidable conversion we must make: to believe utterly in the divine mercy, no longer to poison our souls by tabulating failures and miseries, but to throw everything back to God, both successes and failures, with a soul serenely free and peacefully abandoned.

This is the great transformation. Our dream is to be the *elder* son: faithful, irreproachable, upright, reasonable. But instead we are asked to experience the folly of the reconciled child who is not afraid of ridicule nor embarrassed by people's comments on his return. He is happy that the Father is what he is, and he no longer thinks of himself. He is secure in his reconciliation; he has learned what gratuity is.

All we need to discover is this God of gratuity who loves us simply because he is good. He longs for us to live in the freedom and strength which meekness, humility, and selflessness engender. Let us ask together and for one another the grace to *believe* in this mercy, to live as pardoned sinners so that this house may become yet more "the Father's house."

THE AUTHORS

Canon Robert Guelluy of Tournai, Belgium, is the author of *A l'ecoute de Dieu, La Creation,* and other works. — *Father Germain Lesage, O.M.I.,* teaches in the University of Ottawa. — *Sister Mary Catherine, O.S.U.,* teaches at the Ursuline Academy in Cumberland, Maryland. — Chicago poet *James Bonk* has had poems published by the *Minnesota Review, Midwest,* the *DePaul Literary Magazine,* and other journals. — *Father William F. Hogan, C.S.C.,* is chairman of the theology department in Stonehill College, North Easton, Massachusetts.

The Importance of Adjustment

GERMAIN LESAGE, O.M.I.

Mental adjustment to reality is a requisite of happiness. It is achieved through a personal style of life that is a constant attention to destiny.

Psychologically, no human existence can be felt to be an absolutely complete success. Even Saint Paul would not assert that he "already had been made perfect" (Phil. 3:12). A total satisfaction about one's life would require both the interior conviction and the unanimous consensus of the environment that a person has integrally fulfilled his vocation. Such a feat can hardly exist.

Thus, adjustment to oneself, to society, and to God cannot be absolute; but at least a minimum is required for happiness and satisfactory fulfilment of one's ideal.

I. THE NATURE OF ADJUSTMENT

Adjustment, or adaptation to life, can be considered from many points of view: psychologically, it appears as inner quiet; morally, it is a good conscience; physically, it becomes full measure.

A. INNER QUIET

Interior peace is essentially related to the effective pursuit of vocation; it is victory over trials and setbacks.

Failures are naturally harder to take calmly as age increases. A student who just starts his professional education faces a wide choice of possibilities; if he fails in one he can easily recover, take another chance, and still be a success. But an aging person, already engaged deeply in one line, can hardly switch his efforts to a new one; for him, a bad mistake cannot be remedied without strenuous efforts. This is why young people are rather optimistic; the avenues of life open to them are numerous and large. But it is not so with adults whose choice is already definitive.

On the other hand, older persons learn successfully to avoid failures. Their range of action being gradually limited by repeated choices, by decisive steps in a given direction, they concentrate

their efforts on a well-chartered course and take only necessary risks. Then their virtue becomes stronger with successive fruitful moves and advancing time. Young people, on the contrary, often lack a definite aim, and are apt to take more chances and suffer more losses.

With age, experience also progresses; difficulties can be better foreseen and overcome; self-mastery and confidence grow deeper and generate a mental balance that guarantees success. Meanwhile, fear of failure decreases and interior quiet grows.

B. GOOD CONSCIENCE

Adjustment to life, considered in the sphere of morality, is good conscience, which includes four elements: joy, effort, admiration, and freedom.

Joy is much more than pleasure. The latter is partial and tied to a material object; but the former is unlimited and spiritual. The joy that springs from a good conscience consists in the feeling of being intimately united with the Source of value, of being in agreement with the Principle of duty and vocation. This joy increases with virtue, for the hope that prompted the quest of perfection at the beginning of spiritual life, is confirmed by successful advances in the search of one's destiny. The pursuit of the ideal, having survived the trials of concrete life, becomes more and more vivid, attractive, and laden with joy.

Effort is endlessly required for a good conscience. The links between the person and his ideal would be broken if he would relax unduly and be satisfied with himself. The calmness caused by joy is not a state, but an act; it would vanish with inactivity and complacency. It needs therefore to be propped up with efforts at each new instant, in order to stay in line with one's ideal. Good conscience is not a self-contentment; it is a cooperation with God, a divine friendship that must always be kept growing through unfailing attention.

Admiration of the grandeur of human life is also an element of good conscience. The well-adjusted man, because he seeks perfection, cannot but marvel at God's ever-present inspiration, comfort, and kind touch, which tell their supernatural origin. The memory of trials that were followed by virtuous triumphs combines with the beauty of the ideal to prompt a mystical dedication which

is a source of wonderment to the soul. The admiration of God's manifold grace is possibly the mainstay of good conscience.

Freedom of the mind is experienced by the well-adjusted person; he does not feel enslaved by injunctions, or belittled by demands, even of ambitious rulers. Being suavely attracted by a lofty ideal he feels, in his trek towards heaven, the inner freedom of the artist who creates a unique masterpiece. One of the safest evidences of genuine sanctity is precisely this interior experience of dynamic liberty. "I am going to God; who can stop me?" asks Saint Teresa of Avila. For such persons the great adventure of perfection becomes a cherished occupation — a fruit of love, not of compulsion.

C. FULL MEASURE

The physical nature of mental adjustment supposes that a person gives his full measure. To really do his best, he must learn to limit, accept, submit, and quiet himself.

In order to fit properly into life, one must know how to *limit* oneself, that is, how to practice the quaint virtue of humility. Many sincere souls miss both perfection and happiness because of their unchecked and restless activity. One of the most important requirements of virtuous life is the discovery and admission of one's limitations. The fulfilment of God's will can only be attained by an enlightened appraisal and use of one's limited qualities, not a perpetual vagrancy in aimless exertion. In community life, the proper delimitation of tasks is securely performed by the authentic authorities; no religious soul could become perfect without heeding these divine signposts.

A person must also *accept* himself as he truly is, if he wants to attain his full measure. This self-acceptance should not prompt submissive laziness and satisfied mediocrity; it must rather inspire a sincere effort to do one's best. But, on the other hand, personal success does not generally require objective perfection in each and every minute action. This is morally impossible. Too much perfectionism would degenerate into undue meticulosity, in criticism of others, and ultimately in sterile inaction. One has to be satisfied with the relative success that is possible for his talents.

Personal plenitude supposes that one *submit* oneself to the exigencies of society. The institutional structures of the Church

and of religious communities, as well as those of the legitimate state, guarantee an orderly use and development of individual qualities. Social duties and norms are to the person what the rails are to the locomotive: a strong frame which makes the way straight and clear to the end. An exaggerated institutionalism could destroy individual freedom, but a well-governed group is a powerful safeguard of the true liberty required for moral conduct.

Finally, a person must *quiet* his ambitions and remain at the level of his actual ability if he wants to ever feel satisfied. Those who are always disgruntled, who claim that their talents are ignored, that their work is belittled, can never be happy. They just do not know their own self nor the realities of life. It is a great merit to size up one's ambitions properly and to find contentment in one's little successes. Sincere and even naive enjoyment of God's and other people's kindnesses is a sure proof that a person possesses plenitude and adaptation.

II. THE PRACTICE OF ADJUSTMENT

The one who wants to be mentally well-adjusted must work for his destiny and for the success of his life.

A. TOILING FOR DESTINY

Man does not receive his destiny ready-made and on a silver platter; he has to look, to work, and to fight for it. Four qualities are then required: attention, dedication, concentration, tractability.

Attention to one's vocation is the starting point of a successful life. The indifferent person, who does not care, is definitively out of the contest. Similarly, the timid one who lacks the courage to face himself and the world won't achieve a thing. The kingdom of heaven is hard to reach and only "the violent have been seizing it by force" (Matt. 11:12).

The first element of attention is a firm decision to achieve one's destiny and the persuasion that this can actually be done. Then a three stage race begins: the choice of a goal, the assumption of a duty, the desire for victory. Everyone must, first of all, be convinced that God, who has endowed him with a unique soul, has also entrusted to him a distinctive task; only a coward would betray this divine confidence. Next, one must take up a concrete task; without it, one would remain in the anonymous crowd of on-

lookers who let the world go by without taking the least part in its progress. Attention to one's providential role, especially if it is a purely spiritual one, such as suffering, gives a sense of dignity and importance and also the hope of victory, which is the indispensable launching platform of a fruitful life.

Dedication to the will of God, ascertained by a prudential inquiry, is essential to mental adjustment. This precludes a weakness that defers all decisions and fears all obstacles, as well as a pessimism that leads to misanthropy and aloofness from community work.

Dedication requires that we have the courage to take up a challenge, and the determination to conquer even the toughest obstacles. It overcomes infantile abdication in face of common difficulties; it never gives up in the middle of setbacks that can be remedied; it carries out faithfully the assignments given by those who authentically express the will of God.

Concentration on the final end is essential to the effective pursuit of one's personal role on earth. Once the vocation has been found, understood, and accepted, a person must steer his course straight to it. Saint Paul says: "Forgetting what is behind, I strain forward to what is before. I press on towards the goal, to the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Thus, the key to adjustment is a constant attention to the path that must be followed and to the means that can lead to the end. Many talented people waste their lives because they disperse their energy in too many fields; they lack a good method and get lost in incoherence or superficiality. They should learn to do well in the limited sphere that is truly theirs.

Tractability, or mental flexibility, enters also the concrete picture of destiny. While some persons remain idle and just don't care, there are others who take up their work so fanatically that they do not heed anything else. They are prisoners of a narrow-mindedness that shuts off all avenues to wise choices or maneuvers.

Being a lifelong search for God's will, personal vocation is not univocal or mathematical. It adjusts itself to necessities and circumstances. It follows all providential directions, whether these appear in the form of lawful orders, interior trials, social setbacks, annoying illnesses or bad weather!

B. ACHIEVING SUCCESS

In a well-adjusted life, success is destiny in the making; hence, it comprehends a fourfold activity: creation, obligation, investigation, socialization.

Creation of one's perfection makes life an exciting experience. When a person is born he is, in the moral field, a pure possibility which must be developed, with God's grace, by relentless effort. To build up a virtuous life is a most captivating aim and a very strenuous labor. A person cannot be successful, either psychologically or objectively, if he does not undertake a hard and truly personal task, either physical or moral. If one's ordinary duty does not allow any creative, distinctive work, then some interesting hobby should be found to relieve the weight of daily routine and provide a feeling of effectiveness.

Obligation does not sound pleasant to modern ears, but it is a must! We are indebted to God for our life and our personality; to society for help and enjoyment of all kinds; to our own self for possibilities of betterment and progress. We should feel an obligation to repay for all this. We must make a success of ourselves, but a success that is rational, orderly, in line with our God-given, sociable, and unique nature.

Since our existence must follow some divine and basic standards, we must watch the obligatory signposts that are providentially placed along our life to show us the right way. This entails a cheerful expectancy of the future, a liking of the simple things that make real life, a careful avoidance of imaginary fears, and a recognition of the good aspects that are to be found in every trouble.

The most urgent obligation is that of the present moment. If all our energies were aimed towards each instant of life, to make every one of them a complete success, then our whole existence would become a wonderful destiny. As our Lord says: "Do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow will have anxieties of its own. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matt. 6:34). Let us take all daily occasions of virtue, and no grace will be neglected or wasted.

Investigation, or prudential planning, has two aspects: decision and organization.

Moral perfection results from the practice of prudence, the main act of which is the command of conscience. Absolute inerrancy being impossible to man, he should be satisfied with a good average of sound decisions; hence, he must not postpone his answers to difficulties until he can find a metaphysically unassailable solution. However, before taking a step, he has to investigate all possible courses, principles, and facts that concur in a prudential judgment; he must use his own experience, consult wise counsellors, call on God's grace; but once he has done his best to discover the practical truth, he must decide.

This decision, which is so important in moral investigation, ought to be orderly, that is, in accordance with the end that is being sought. Thus it is an organization of the coming actions in view of the ultimate destiny.

Socialization, that is, insertion of the individual into society, follows human nature. Everybody's perfection is dependent on his social environment. Nobody can fulfill his own destiny, either temporal or supernatural, if he remains completely alone.

The popular saying, "Smile and the world smiles with you," expresses a deep truth. One receives from others as much as one gives to others. Social participation is reciprocity. Personal success depends on social assistance, and social assistance depends on effective partnership, that is, socialization.

Hence, good mental adjustment demands hearty cooperation with other people and friendly association with them. The best means to achieve this is to be pleasant and optimistic. When our neighbor returns from a three-day journey, we should not tell him that his absence passed like an hour, but rather that we missed him so much that it seemed to have lasted a year! And let us pray that this word be actually true!

* * *

Mental adjustment, which is the effect of maturity, coincides concretely with spiritual plenitude. It is the effective exercize of all individual abilities, the use of all talents. By it, a person can give his full measure.

Saint Teresa of Avila says in the first of her *Meditations on the Canticles:* "Women do not need more than what their intel-

ligence warrants. With this, God shall have mercy on them." This slightly mediaeval anti-feminism contains a sound piece of advice, for everybody must be satisfied with his lot and do his very best to improve it with the help of God. Then he will undoubtedly find happiness here below and, in the hereafter, he will receive the just reward promised to the good and faithful servant.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor:

Like many others our religion department is engaged in re-grouping for the days of aggiornamento. We would like very much to locate departments which have already made significant accomplishments in this line. May we appeal to the readers of SPONSA REGIS to help us to identify high schools with these basic standards:

1. Every religion teacher is
   a. qualified pedagogically and has
   b. at least a teaching minor (18-20 hours) in theology from an accredited school.
2. Religion is taught the same number of periods per week and the same length period as other academic subjects in that school.

This, of course, is not to imply that schools cannot have a good religion department without fulfilling the above requirements.

It may seem we are enlisting the public press in a private cause, but there is no national organization that has this information. Lacking a research grant, it is impossible to contact each Catholic high school individually, though we'll contact each school named. We'll be happy to share the results of this search with any who help along the way and/or are interested.

Gratefully,

Sister Mary Agnesita, B.V.M.
St. Joseph Academy
3200 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

Recollection and the Active Religious

SISTER MARY CATHERINE, O.S.U.

Recollection, as we have heard often enough, is necessary for advancement in perfection. Indeed, so necessary is it that a religious who does not practice recollection runs the risk of superficiality, even of the loss of religious spirit. These things have been brought often to our attention in retreat, in conferences, in books of spiritual reading. And examples — examples that sometimes discourage the beginner — have been held up to us: Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, who once said she never allowed more than three minutes to pass without thinking of God; Father Willie Doyle, who multiplied the saying of aspirations until he attained the staggering number of one hundred thousand a day. And even while we are cautioned not to attempt his spiritual mathematics, more than one writer has intimated that the "most serviceable, most practical, and most efficacious" means to maintain a continuous contact with God is the "employment of a single aspiration recited a number of times a day."

In view of all this, it would seem that the active religious has little choice but to select her aspiration, decide her particular method of check and re-check, and school herself to acquiring this habit of recollection. Yet before adding still another exercise to our horarium and still another item to our particular examen, would it be out of place to ask whether the repeated recitation of a single aspiration is indeed the "most serviceable and most efficacious way" of maintaining ourselves in the presence of God?

It requires little reflection to see that our age is an age of words. From telephone and television, from the paperback and the lecture platform we are bombarded with words even as the atom has been bombarded, and the split in our interior silence is as drastic, the consequences as far-reaching. Will, then, the repetition of more words, though we mean them to be prayerful, of itself counteract the ills that too much talking has brought upon us? To this writer it does not seem so. Pope's adage still holds:

Words are like leaves and where they most abound
Much fruit of sense beneath is seldom found.

And, more important, was it not Christ himself who warned: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven"? Where is this kingdom of heaven if not within us?

The acquiring of a good habit takes effort and perseverance. But if we are convinced that it is a habit which we *must* acquire and if, above all, we really want to acquire it, our effort will be sustained, our perseverance secured. For where there is a will, there is still a way.

Let us consider then what recollection is, and what we gain by acquiring its practice.

Recollection is the awareness of our being in God's presence, an awareness that is not a direct consideration, but is rather peripheral to our consciousness even as our minds are busy about other things. Direct consideration of the fact that we are in the presence of God could well constitute mental prayer and should certainly precede it. But consciousness that we are working or talking or eating in God's presence is something else. It is like the consciousness that we have of the sun light that is streaming into the room in which we are working, or the movement of others about us as we ourselves go from place to place, though we may not have these things in the forefront of our thoughts. This consciousness that we are in the presence of God is sometimes likened by spiritual writers to the awareness that a mother has of her sleeping child though she herself may be busied about her household chores. It is the awareness of the beloved in the Canticle of Canticles: "I sleep, but my heart watches."

Yet here again it may be noted in passing, that the mother did not acquire her concern for her child by repeating to herself at first three times a day and then multiplying the number, "I must heed my child, I must heed my child, I must heed my child." Nor was the lover of the Scriptures so trained. One cannot teach the heart.

It would seem, then, that as our love for God grows, as his friendship means more to us, we will think of him more frequently. And if we need to train ourselves to a habit of thoughtful remembrance of his presence, it will be only as a considerate husband

may need to jolt his memory for his wife's anniversary, because his memory fails, not because his devotion lags.

But how grow in this friendship? The "will it" of Saint Thomas Aquinas may have sufficed his sister. For us there may be need for more than a command. Before we can will a good, it must appear good to us. And here we fail to realize the personal nature of God's friendship frequently enough, despite the best of intentions, because during the time of mental prayer, which is meant to be a time of growth in this appreciation, we fail to make the prayer personal to *us*.

Often enough mental prayer begins with the injunction, "Let us place ourselves in the presence of God." The injunction is badly worded, of course. We cannot place ourselves in or out of the presence of God. We are always there. But we are not always conscious of being in the presence of an omnipotent, omniscient, all-loving Friend. It might be well before we start our mental prayer, simply to concentrate on this fact, to focus our mind on the realization that we are actually in the presence of God. And it would be well not to "pray" at all until this realization has come home to us. A waste of time? At this rate, we shall never "get in our prayers"? Perhaps not, but do we ever dial a telephone number and begin to give our message before we discover whether the right person is on the other side to receive it?

God is, of course, always on the other side of the line. Yet sometimes we are not aware of our relationship with him as we begin our conversation. Sometimes we have begun and ended our prayer without realizing to whom we have spoken. It is somewhat like the little second grader who went into the box and made his confession, completely unaware that the priest had not yet come into the church. What the nature of our prayer will be is determined by our own realization of what we are. Hence Augustine's plea: "Lord, that I may know thee, that I may know myself."

That the awareness of God will differ from person to person is brought home strikingly by an incident from the classroom. Among the students was the daughter of a judge. The mother had died in infancy and her father had reared her with the love and tenderness of both mother and father. The relationship of those two was beautiful to behold: complete trust and filial affection on

the one side, devotion and paternal love on the other — a mirror of the love that should exist on our part for our Father in heaven. If the child were in the courtroom where her father had to hand down sentence to a man convicted of crime, how differently would child and prisoner look upon the judge! Both are aware of the judge, both stand in his presence, but how dissimilar their attitudes! For one there is fear, perhaps hatred; for the other, only love.

In much the same way, if we would place ourselves consciously in the presence of God, if we realized who he is and who we are, our behavior would be in keeping with that realization.

For even the friends of God will look upon him with differing degrees of friendliness, but if they would remain his friends, look upon him they must. If, like Peter, they meet the gaze of Christ and know they have failed him, they will reflect upon what they have done and seek forgiveness. Then indeed they must strive to be recollected, having learned that the remembrance of Christ's presence leads them to virtue, that forgetfulness of what he means to them leads them astray. If, on the other hand, they can return his glance with reciprocated love, there will be little need to school themselves to recollection by reiterated vocal prayer. They may indeed exclaim, "Lord, it is good to be here," but whether they put into words their feelings or not, they shall want to linger in that presence in memory at least, and their heart will return as often as it is free of other things. For it is still true that where our treasure is, there too is our heart.

A speeding motorist may need to be reminded of the law by roadsigns or even the sight of a police car; a slack employee may need to be stirred by the realization that the master may come when he hopes not and find him sleeping; the beginner in the spiritual life may need to prod his mind and his will with the thought that he is under the all-seeing eye of God who is both his master and his judge. But to whom, if not to religious, do Christ's words apply: "I have not called you servants, but I have called you friends"?

For a friend we work not for reward but to give pleasure, and if we do something for a friend instinctively our thoughts turn toward him whom we would please. So should it be with Christ. As we grow in friendship with Christ, we grow in recollection.

As we grow in friendship with Christ, we keep his commandments. And as we keep his commandments, we discover that not by mechanical repetition of formulas, however pious, nor by strained effort of memory on our part, do we keep in his presence. Rather it is the result of his own indwelling, for he himself has said, "If any man love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

This will indeed be recollection.

MEDICAL CONVENTION: CARDIAC EXHIBIT

Press closer to the enamel pan,
poet; you always talk of touching
human hearts. Somebody's hollow husk
was put there, empty as a tomb or
honeycomb. The grave pathologist
with cold probe points out the little rooms
and tubes that shut inopportunely.
But gaping laymen bore him; so he
skins off his prophylactic gloves, tired
of those who cannot see that *mitral*
stenosis stopped this pump, not love.

JAMES BONK

Criticism and Loyalty in Religious Life

WILLIAM F. HOGAN, C.S.C.

Spiritual writers and retreat masters are always on the alert to warn religious of the dangers to themselves and their communities from indulging in any kind of criticism. The religious violate the virtue of obedience, weaken virtue in their souls, and foster discord among their companions when they slip into the habit of "griping." There is no quicker way to upset the good order of a religious house than to have one or two discontented religious spread seeds of disharmony through harmful criticism.

Must one, however, draw the conclusion that all criticism or criticalness is necessarily to be uprooted from the religious soul? We think not. Criticism in itself is neither good nor evil, but indifferent, being simply a discriminating judgment or evaluation. It is the tone and purpose of the criticism which determines its morality and effects. Had there not been a good spirit of criticism in the world, civilization would never have emerged, and certainly mankind would never have seen the technological and cultural advances that grace the twentieth century. All development stems from a positive criticism and self-evaluation. Holy mother Church would not be undergoing a liturgical revival were it not for a critical spirit; ecumenism would be a non-entity; missionary developments would never have germinated, and the Church would not have spread in accordance with our Lord's wishes. The modern Catholic educational system was born of criticism, as were so many charitable institutions. Positive, constructive criticism has had its role to play in the history of the Church and this role will endure until the end of the world. Our age is witnessing a powerful instance of it in the ecumenical council.

Every religious institute is the Church in miniature, for it constitutes a cell which visibly manifests the invisible (and visible) elements of the Mystical Body. The common life externalizes the bond of love in the Spirit which binds together the members of the Mystical Body. The religious profession and the various stages leading up to it correspond to the sacrament of Baptism and the

preliminary stage of catechumen; the religious vows are, in a sense, extensions of the promises made at Baptism lived out in a very vivid manner. The government of a religious institute is patterned after the system of government in the Mystical Body with its central, diocesan and parochial organization becoming general, provincial and local administrations. If holy mother Church is constantly engaged in evaluating and criticizing herself in relation to fulfilling Christ's mission, then the religious institute which reflects the nature of the Church should likewise be engaged in continual self-criticism to ascertain whether it is fulfilling its purpose.

The self-criticism of the Church is not carried on only by the hierarchy. In preparation for the Council the laity were urged to submit their views, for "the very structure of the Church suggests that public opinion is an essential part of its existence as an institution. Since authority in the Church requires for its own effectiveness an almost day to day awareness of the state of Christian practice among its members, public opinion has a role to play here which cannot be abrogated or denied without at the same time placing in jeopardy the Christian life of the faithful and their efforts toward salvation. Where else but from its members will those in authority learn the true content of the day to day Christian challenge? Where but from among those who stand in the world itself, at the junction of the Church and society, can Church authority take the measure of the changing generations and their impact on the soul of man?"[1]

So, too, for parallel reasons, self-evaluation and constructive criticism in a religious institute should not be restricted to superiors alone; the individual members should be able to offer their opinions without being considered disobedient or rebellious religious. Some religious are made to feel that since they have made their vows according to the constitutions of the community, they cannot without sin or fault question the constitutions or customs of their institute. "It is frightening that, by an erroneous conception of religious obedience, so much of the damage done to the personalities of women in religion can have the appearance of being fully justified. Under the sincere conviction of carrying out the

[1] Richard Cardinal Cushing, Pastoral Letter, "The Church and Public Opinion," April, 1963. Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, Massachusetts, p. 13.

will of God some superiors feel obligated to rule in such a way as to leave no room whatever for the exercise of prudence or of common sense on the part of subjects.... The impression is given that it is simply unbecoming in a religious to have independent ideas, even about her own work, and wrong to express them.... There is a widespread tendency on the part of religious superiors to misinterpret their role and keep religious subjects childish rather than childlike."[2]

The Code of Canon Law in its general laws governing religious life provides religious with channels for positive self-evaluation. But just how well are these laws and their implications presented to religious? Perhaps the fear that constructive criticism may degenerate into harmful "griping" is the reason that religious are not made fully aware of their opportunities for expression. However, if proper instruction in these matters is given, there need not be fear of an unhealthy spirit developing among the religious, for the precise limits in this matter can be imparted and the religious can be effectively warned of the supernatural and natural dangers of using the wedge principle.

Take, for example, the question of religious Chapters. How many religious realize that Chapters are (or should be) held periodically to re-examine the effectiveness of the community apostolate as well as the manner of living out the constitutions, and that each and every religious with active voice has a share in the work of the Chapter? In the minds of many religious a Chapter is a purely formalistic meeting of superiors and some elected delegates with the Provincial or General, with little significance for the ordinary religious. This is far from the mind of the Code, which states that Chapters do have power (c. 501 #1), and ordinarily this power will be greater than that of individual superiors. In view of the fact that religious elect delegates or representatives (who should be equal in number with the *ex officio* members), they are partaking indirectly in the power of the Chapter. The people they elect represent them, and thus they have the right and duty to express their views charitably and candidly on important community issues to their delegates. They will in no way be violating

[2] John Evoy and Van Christoph, *Personality Development in the Religious Life*. Sheed and Ward, New York, 1963, pp. 182-183.

religious obedience in speaking in a constructive way to those attending the Chapter as regards ways of promoting the common good of the religious institute and consequently of the Church; but they must not feel that their rights have been violated if their suggestions are not followed. And delegates, conscientiously elected, will make proposals at the Chapters if they feel that the best interests of the community are involved. This is one way that communities make progress and a legitimate area in which a religious may offer positive criticism; for this is the very reason why Chapters were instituted. If religious should feel that the results of Chapters are pre-arranged, then the fault lies with them; for Chapters were originally instituted by Saint Benedict to provide religious with an opportunity to voice their views in important matters.

Religious councillors are another vehicle provided by the law for voicing a community's constructive criticism. The Code requires that superiors have a council with the idea that they will provide advice to the religious superior for better government. Though possessing no governing power themselves, since there is only one superior to a house, their advice or consent is often required before a superior may act, in order that the effects of a proposed course of action may be weighed well by mature religious. This is not to say that the councillors may force a superior to act; such is not the case. But in some cases they may prevent a superior from following a course of action, if the law requires their consent. According to the Code, councillors are not supposed to agree with the superior if their consciences dictate otherwise; thus there is provided the opportunity for a greater critical evaluation of some aspects of religious life and the apostolate. Moreover, councillors are in a position to make suggestions to the superior for the better government of the house, although the superior is bound neither to admit these nor to follow them. Yet at least there is given here in practice the possibility of some constructive evaluation on the part of some religious, and the law (c. 105, 3) requires that they give their sincere opinion without fear of offending against the virtue of obedience.

The system of internal (and in some cases external) visitations provided in the Code of Canon Law, while basically designed to

safeguard the values and principles of religious life, also serves as an opportunity to present suggestions to higher superiors for the advancement of life in the religious community and the promotion of the common good. Most visitors are anxious that religious subjects express their true sentiments about life in the religious institute. If a religious feels that something is wrong in the house or the community at large, he is certainly obliged to speak up to the visitor, because all religious have an obligation to contribute to the common good of their institute and prevent any harm from befalling it. If they think that the good of the institute can be furthered, then they should feel free to make suggestions to the visitor, realizing, of course, that nobody is obliged to follow them. Often the view of the subject will differ from that of the superior, and the problems seen from the vantage point of the subject may contribute some valuable assistance to the superior. Those conducting the visit should encourage openness and positive contributions on the part of the religious; unfortunately, many religious today feel that any suggestions they might make will brand them as rebels or malcontents, and this may well be due to the atmosphere created by those in authority. The common good, both negatively and positively considered, should be the guiding norm in conducting visitations. There is no need to fear that religious will have a false idea of their place in the community as subjects if they are encouraged to develop positive critical thinking. Obedience can be stressed together with the positive approach — an obedience which takes more account of the rational nature of the subject.

Religious communities engaged in educational or hospital apostolates will often have advisory committees organized for the purpose of giving counsel to the administration. Such committees have no governing power whatever but can have an important effect on the apostolic work of institutions conducted by religious. Here, above all, religious appointed to such committees should have freedom in expressing their views relative to the work of the institution. Presumably the members will be those recognized for their ability and perception; they should not be merely "yes" men or women. If such a board is to fulfill its purposes, constructive criticism must be allowed free reign. From such an approach,

progress will be advanced; religious institutions will be able to keep up with the changing needs of the times as viewed through the eyes of several rather than one. Errors may well be averted when all the aspects of a problem are thrashed out openly without fear of commiting fault in being frank. This is no area where one should feel that it is more virtuous to simply go along with the mind of the one in charge; such an attitude would be erroneously tagged virtuous. Superiors want religious on such boards to be open and disagree with policies in accordance with their convictions, if need be; otherwise there would be no reason for such advisory committees to exist. Provided that the constructive criticism is kept within the confines of the meeting room and that seeds are not scattered before other religious, especially the younger, there will be no discontent fostered among the religious, and religious obedience will not suffer. The religious who are involved will not themselves develop a negative outlook if they keep their ideas on the speculative level and do not let them influence their conduct practically, ever remembering that no matter what they think, they are to obey the decisions of their superiors.

Loyalty to the religious community and its traditions is a quality to be developed among all religious, for a religious has a vocation to a specific community and must absorb the spirit of the community to live out that vocation. Nothing should be permitted to endanger one's fidelity to that vocation. Perhaps the development of a critical attitude among the religious could endanger it, but it need not. For if a religious community would insist on loyalty to traditions because they are traditions, something is radically wrong. Traditions are valuable not because they are traditions but because they contribute to the well-being of the community and the life of the members. If traditions have become antiquated, they should no longer be observed, and religious, while remaining loyal to the community and its spirit, would do well to rethink them. A distinction should be made between loyalty to the community and loyalty to its traditions. One can be solidly faithful to the religious institute and obedience and still have a constructively critical attitude; indeed, if the religious were never looking for the good of the institute but merely holding on to traditions passively, the loyalty would be of a specious type.

Some few communities are so afraid of religious becoming critical and disloyal (terms which are wrongly equated) that they frown on their members attending institutes and workshops organized for attendance by many communities. Or if the religious are permitted to attend, they have been so trained in a false sense of dedication that they fear to mention or discuss their own community practices. This is truly unfortunate, for exchange of ideas at such meetings has much to contribute to the advancement of the religious life in an institute and is not designed to foster a disobedient or disloyal spirit.

There are likewise, surprisingly enough, a few communities which forbid religious to seek outside help either by law or practice. Thus even superiors are unable to bring problems, personal or community, to priests who might be able to help them with advice. Perhaps it is felt that the constitutions and traditions are so sacred that they may in no way be changed; but surely holy mother Church has tried to show religious that constitutions, while remaining faithful to the ideals of the founder, need to be adapted—and adaptation requires help and guidance from authorities outside as well as inside the community. More effort is still required in many areas to overcome narrowness of outlook on the religious life and religious institutes, and to install the concept of the common good of the religious institute and of the Church in its primary place.

A positive, critical attitude on the part of the religious must in itself never be identified with disobedience; it is only when the criticism has descended to the level of "griping" that it is wrong, or when the religious follows his own convictions rather than the superior's wishes. A positive evaluation of religious life on the part of the subject, with an attitude of humble submission to the decisions of superiors, is virtuous and partakes of a genuinely lively interest in the community — an interest which should be developed in all religious. Passivity as such is neither virtuous nor psychologically sound. Let religious and religious institutes follow the example of holy mother Church in charitably re-examining themselves, using the vehicles supplied in the law for their expression; thus God will be given greater glory and the effectiveness of religious institutes will be increased.

Book Reviews

HOW TO FOUND YOUR OWN RELIGION. By Francis J. Phelan, C.S.C. Helicon Press, Baltimore, 1963. Pp. v, 119. Cloth, $2.95.

At first glance, one might suspect that here we have yet another of those popular do-it-yourself project books; but the full title puts us straight with the addition, in smaller print, "and other stories." The book is just that: a collection of ten light narratives, each of which portrays the devil going about, in true satanic fashion, minding his own business in our modern world, with its TV programs, happiness pills, psychoanalysts, efficiency experts. While the stories are interesting—humorous in parts—one tires of the steady diet of the same theme, much as one would of the same basic menu for ten consecutive meals, even though each meal presented the food in a new guise.

The individual stories could prove beneficial in bringing home to upper grade and high school students the varied wiles of satan. A Sister would probably enjoy reading a few chapters for diversion, but I doubt that any would consider the book sufficiently beneficial to be included in every convent library.

Sister Jean Marie, S.S.N.D.
Notre Dame of the Lake
Mequon, Wisconsin

SHEPHERD OF MANKIND. By William F. Barrett. Doubleday and Company, New York, 1964. Pp. 288. Cloth $4.95.

"He (the pope) must be studied in himself, in what he has been, and in what he is, and must be considered in terms of his inheritance." With this in mind, the author presents a biographical and environmental study of Pope Paul VI.

Pertinent information such as birthdate, schools attended, and other significant data is synthesized in a very readable style. Because the author feels family background has had a profound influence on the life of Giovanni Battista Montini, he treats it very thoroughly. Giorgio Montini, the head of the household, was vigorously active in Italian Catholic Action as a newspaper editor, while for his wife, Giuditta, "the great realities in life... were spiritual."

As chaplain to FUCI (the Federation of Catholic University Students), as a minor official in the Vatican, through the periods of Facism-Nazism and the resulting holocaust, to his eventual appointment as Papal Undersecretary of State, Monsignor Montini's path is closely traced.

In 1954, Pope Pius XII appointed him Archbishop of Milan. The

author evidently feels this can be explained by the proverbial saying, "Promoveatur ut amoveatur" (Promote him so that he can be removed). Furthermore, the author intimates that Pius definitely had this in mind because he did not make the archbishop a cardinal, even though the Milan ordinary was customarily a cardinal archbishop.

As shepherd in Milan — a city known for its hard core Communism — Montini's "Discorsi" (pastoral letters) touched on various facets of life which he felt needed explanation. The high point in his diocesan pastorate was his "Mission to Milan" —an attempt to return his lost sheep to the fold.

During John XXIII's short pontificate, the archbishop was made a cardinal, and upon the death of Pope John, was chosen to continue the work of the Church as Paul VI.

Though there is nothing spectacular or spellbinding about this biography, it nevertheless deserves a place on one's reading list because it gives a good insight into the life and character of our present pope. The text is accompanied by many handsome photos. Identifying footnotes could have provided a valuable chronological guide for the many quotations.

Charles Griffith
Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota

A HEART TO KNOW THEE, A Practical Summa of the Spiritual Life. By E. J. Cuskelly, M.S.C., S.T.D. The Newman Press, Westminister, Marylond, 1963. Pp. vii, 317. Cloth, $5.50.

The author is addressing the "less speculative minds," and — judging from the range of topics covered — the less informed. Inevitably the inclusion of so much material in one book is done at the expense of depth. But the author has called his book a "summa"; and that is accurate.

However, the book purports to center on the theme of grace perfecting "person," while attempting to avoid the technical jargon of psychology on the one hand, and the "heavy" theological approach to doctrine on the other. There seems to be some contradiction inherent in an attempt to combine the topic nature and person with the construction of a practical summa of the spiritual life. The intention gives promise of going vertically and ends up running horizontally. Readers of spiritual books who tend to be single-minded in their interests and pursuits may not be served by *A Heart To Know Thee* in the way the author desired; on the other hand, beginners may well find it a useful compendium.

Sister Margaret Cortona, O.P.
Newman High School
Wausau, Wisconsin

PERSONALITIES IN THE GOSPEL STORY. By Mother Mary Simeon, S.H.C.J. Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1963. Pp. xi, 140. Cloth, $3.50.

What is it that makes a good story? Not only the plot and setting, but even more vital to an interesting story are the characters involved in the narrative. Man's relationship to man is infinite in its variations, his

impact on those he meets diverse and unpredictable. This interplay of personality upon personality provides the germ for a story. When one of the characters involved in an incident is the God-man, the interest is even more heightened.

Personalities in the Gospel, a collection of appealing vignettes, flashes the spotlight on 48 different characters Christ encountered in his public ministry. Entering into the stream of life at his time, Christ met and engaged in conversation with people of various positions, beliefs, and personalities. They were good or bad, likable or unlikable, admirable or despicable. What Christ said to them, their emotional reaction to him, and what happened because of his meeting with them is keenly interesting. For all of us who believe in him, Christ's words and actions carry tremendous meaning and significance.

Written and presented in an easy yet graceful style, this book can be read without intellectual challenge. Recommended for spiritual reading, by this reviewer, for any Christian.

Sister Mary Xavier, O.S.U.
Ursuline Academy
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

SAINT MARTIN DE PORRES. By Giuliana Cavallini. Translated by Caroline Holland. B. Herder Book Company, Saint Louis, 1963. Pp. ix, 254. Cloth, $3.95.

In these times of interracial unrest, strife, and violence, we can look to Saint Martin de Porres, the patron of social justice in the Republic of Peru, to teach our nation how fundamental in practice is the law of charity. Throughout this book, Giuliana Cavallini points out consistently and well that Martin's living example preached the law of brotherhood and love, that charity and hate will ever be sorely incompatible. The fine treatment of our Dominican lay brother's life admirably accentuates both the natural and the supernatural ways in which Saint Martin used divine grace to grow in love of God and to assist his neighbor to attain peace of soul and health of mind and body.

The biography is recognized as an official one by the Postulator of the Dominican Order. Historically clear, brilliantly exact, genuinely alive, expanding with Martin's contagious love on every page, the work and its merits speak out for themselves. Reading it will entitle you to a rich experience and unique reward.

Sister Mary Rosamond Walsh, O.P.
Saint Joseph Convent
Belmont, Massachusetts

SPIRITUAL LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS. By Venerable Francis Libermann, C.S.Sp. Edited and translated by Walter Van De Putte, C.S.Sp. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1963. Pp. x, 325. Cloth, $5.00.

Duquesne University has accepted the formidable task of publishing the spiritual writings of Father Francis Libermann. One gets some idea of the extent of this undertaking when one considers that the present volume is the third of six which will contain a selection of the spiritual letters of this outstanding director of souls.

Generally it is not considered advisable to conduct spiritual direction by letter. This is certainly not true in the case of Father Libermann. The seventy-five letters contained in this volume are gems. Addressed to twenty-eight different persons, among whom are bishops, priests and seminarians, they give practical, down-to-earth, and very specific advice.

In going through the various letters one is struck by the simple and clear explanation of difficult spiritual doctrine. Another point worthy of mention is the very common-sense-like approach that Father Libermann takes in the face of problems. It is the approach of one who has drunk deeply at the springs of grace—has allowed this grace to work on his judgment and comes up with a very human solution that has a touch of the divine in it.

A short but comprehensive index at the back of the book allows for quick location of the spiritual doctrine on any given point treated in these letters. This book is a monument of documentation and well worth having on the shelves of any spiritual library.

Peter M. Blatz, O.M.I.
Saint Charles Scholasticate
Battleford, Saskatchewan

THE COMING OF HIS KINGDOM. By Alois Winklhofer. Translated by A. V. Littledale. Herder & Herder, New York, 1963. Pp. 254. Cloth, $4.95.

Here is a powerful meditation on the "last things"—death, judgment, resurrection, heaven, hell—and related topics. By a process of going back over his story and approaching the material from new aspects, the author gives us a fairly complete synthesis of the principal trends in this phase of theology. For example, the moment of death is seen as a moment of decision, summing up all previous decisions and finally fixing the will for good or for evil (p. 49); hell is described as an eternal dying (p. 98); purgatory emerges as a "paradise of suffering" (p. 111). The author is at his best in his description of the general judgment and the resurrection of the body. One familiar with the latest New Testament exegesis is a bit disappointed to note that the apocalyptic passages in the synoptic Gospels are applied literally to the end of the world. Many citations (for example, to the *Summa* of Saint Thomas) are without chapter and verse, and the book lacks an index. But this reviewer definitely recommends it to the general Catholic reading public.

Martin Hopkins, O.P.
Saint Peter Martyr Priory
Winona, Minnesota

THE TRINITY AND OUR MORAL LIFE ACCORDING TO ST. PAUL. By Ceslaus Spicq, O.P. Translated by Sister Marie Aquinas, O.P. The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1963. Pp. xvii, 133. Cloth, $2.75.

Bible scholars have been repeatedly requested to provide studies in scriptural theology which would not merely edify their fellow scholars but which would warm the heart and nourish the intellect of God's people. This is such a study. Father Spicq is anxious to share with us Saint Paul's conviction that "the

new life is inspired and impregnated by charity, a response of love to the love with which God and Christ first loved us" (p. 18).

Prefaced by a chapter on the necessity of a revealed morality, the major part of the work is devoted to Saint Paul's constant teaching that the Christian life is from the Father, in Christ Jesus, by the Holy Spirit. The Christian response is seen as one of filial gratitude and confidence, a desire to conform to the sentiments and conduct of Christ. The law of grace and of charity, the law of Christ dwelling within, results in true liberty, but this in no way authorizes the violation of right or morality. He rightly points out that "the morality of liberty and of love can be lived only by mature persons, by adults, whose age in Christ is measured by the maturity of their moral judgment" (p. 84).

Chapter five on the beauty of the moral life is itself a thing of beauty. The radiant splendor of grace gives beauty from within to the life of a Christian; the harmony between exterior conduct and interior grace gives an esthetic quality to his morality, making it attractive to others. A final chapter recalls that the transformation in Christ will be perfect only in heaven. Our present waiting need not be unpleasant, for the love characteristic of Christians is a happy love.

This is also a happy book, projecting the joy and urgency of Saint Paul's message. Readers may find a certain amount of repetition annoying; the frequent citations unavoidably mar the smoothness of the text; and several assertions are made without adequate explanation. But the slight blemishes should not prevent a wide and grateful audience. Religious share a need with men of all times—"Men had to know why they must react against weariness" (p. 5). This book will help them to know.

Myron Kasprick, O.S.B.
Saint John's Abbey
Collegeville, Minnesota

SHORT NOTICES

TEACH US TO LOVE; Sisters' conference needs. By Dalmatius Madden, O.P., and Francis Sylvester MacNutt, O.P. B. Herder Book Company, Saint Louis, 1963. Pp. ix, 82. Paper, 95c.

A very helpful survey of the kind of topics Sisters would like to have discussed in retreats and conferences. Like Father Dubay's *Sisters' Retreats*, it is based on answers to a questionnaire, and like his book it stresses the importance of understanding the woman religious and meeting her on her own ground. Recommended for all who give conferences to Sisters.

MARY SAVE US. By four Lithuanian girls. Translated by Kestutis A. Trimakas, S.J. Immaculata Press, Putnam, Connecticut, 1963. Pp. 95. Cloth, $1.25.

This distinctive little prayer book, written in a Siberian prison camp, is available once more in this new edition. Despite its name, these prayers are mostly addressed to Jesus the Savior. Simple, sincere expressions of hope, pardon, love, and acceptance speak well for a praying and suffering Church.

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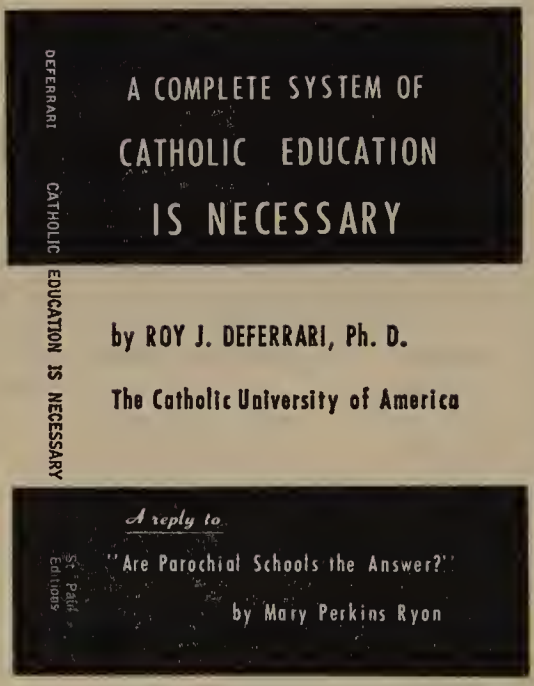

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